



Information **UPDATE**

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction/Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent/125 S. Webster St./P.O. Box 7841/ Madison, WI 53707-7841

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TO: District Administrators, CESA Administrators, CCDEB Administrators,
Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services, and Other Interested Parties

FROM: Carolyn Stanford Taylor, Assistant State Superintendent
Division for Learning Support: Equity and Advocacy

SUBJECT: High School Graduation and Students With Disabilities: How students with disabilities meet the high school graduation policies developed by the local school board

Introduction

Successful completion of high school is a critical prerequisite to success after high school. Individuals who have a high school diploma are considered for jobs not open to those who do not have a diploma. Many post-secondary education/training opportunities require a high school diploma. Students who do not graduate from high school usually experience lower rates of employment, lower incomes, and higher rates of incarceration. Traditionally, students with disabilities have lower high school completion rates than their classmates without disabilities. Wisconsin is addressing the need for higher performance levels by establishing higher standards, school based reform, and accountability systems to promote higher standards and expectations for all students.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 emphasizes the need for students with disabilities to participate and progress in the general education curriculum and be included in statewide and district-wide assessments. In addition, IDEA substantially expands the role of general educators to be involved in individualized education program (IEP) meetings. Adequate preparation for graduation entails a variety of considerations including how to educate, assess, accommodate, and graduate students with disabilities.

Special education law does not require that all students with a disability receive a high school diploma. However, a student with a disability continues to have a right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) until graduation with a regular diploma or until the age of 21. An IEP team has no legal authority to mandate graduation requirements contrary to district graduation policy. However, the IEP team process may be used by local school districts in the context of the graduation policy to determine whether the high school graduation requirements have been met. For example, the IEP team may set educational goals and objectives in areas impacted by the student's disability. Successful completion of the goals and objectives in the IEP

may be relevant in determining whether the student has met the academic performance criteria in the school board's graduation policy.

Schools are responsible for providing a learning environment that ensures students remain encouraged to earn a high school diploma. It is reasonable to expect that most students with disabilities will complete their district's high school graduation requirements. Requiring all students to meet educational standards through the same approach limits options that could be available for students and may not meet the needs of the student with a disability. Students with disabilities who experience difficulty with traditional teaching methods and learning environments need reasonable special education, related services, and supplementary services, including reasonable accommodations and supports to school personnel, to succeed in the general education curriculum. The services identified through the IEP and provided through special education must assist the student in focusing on meaningful goals based on academic content standards as well as the student's needs, preferences, and interests. Earning a high school diploma represents a key element of a viable transition plan for many students with a disability.

If you have any questions, contact Steve Gilles, Transition Consultant, at 608/266-1146 or 1-800-441-4563.

This information update can also be accessed through the Internet:

<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/een/bulindex.html>

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Questions related to completing a local school board's high school graduation policy and receiving a regular high school diploma

1. What is a regular high school diploma?

High school diploma means a document granted by the school board to a pupil upon successful completion of a high school program. This program must meet the requirements established by the board and outlined in s.118.33, Wis. Stats.

2. Do students with disabilities lose eligibility for free appropriate public education (FAPE) when they receive a regular high school diploma?

Yes. Students with a disability who have graduated from high school with a regular high school diploma no longer are eligible to receive special education services. When a student with a disability receives a regular high school diploma, it is considered a change of placement that requires notice. However, those students with disabilities who have left school without a regular high school diploma are entitled to FAPE until they receive a regular high school diploma or reach the age of 21 (or until the end of the school term in which they become 21).

3. Does the school board have to guarantee that all students with disabilities receive a regular high school diploma under their graduation policy?

No. The board policy for high school graduation requirements does not have to guarantee that all students with a disability will receive a regular high school diploma. The school board is not required to lower or to effect substantial modification of standards to accommodate a student with a disability. However, a school board may use the goals and objectives in the individualized education program (IEP) as an alternative means to satisfy academic performance criteria under its high school graduation policy. Whatever approach a school board chooses, it should be clearly stated within the local school board graduation policy and followed by IEP teams or other staff involved in decisions about a student's academic performance.

4. Can students with disabilities exit high school with another type of diploma?

In order to graduate with a regular high school diploma a student with a disability must meet Wisconsin's high school graduation provisions through the local district's defined policies for high school graduation. Any student may exit high school through completing a certificate or a contracted program leading to a high school equivalency diploma (HSED)*; however, these options are not equal to a regular high school diploma.

*All references to HSED in this document are to the program in effect for the last 10 years known as GED01. Students age 17 and older will continue to be able to request permission (and funding) from their local school board to participate in a contracted program through the WTCS or a CBO. A minimum enrollment requirement of 15 hours per week is required.

Note: In order for a person under the state's age of compulsory school attendance (18 in Wisconsin) to access a GED program the state has to receive a waiver from the GED Testing Service (GEDTS).

5. Can students with disabilities receive a regular high school diploma that has a descriptor stamped on it like “alternative program” or “competency based”?

The school district may only issue a diploma consistent with the school board policies. The school board policies may add descriptors to their regular high school diploma or student transcripts as long as they apply to all students with and without disabilities. The district must ensure confidentiality for students with disabilities and, therefore, may not use a descriptor that identifies the student as someone with a disability.

6. What is an alternative program?

Wis. Stat. 115.28(7)(e) states that an “‘alternative education program’ means an instructional program, approved by the school board, that utilizes successful alternative or adaptive school structures and teaching techniques and that is incorporated into existing, traditional classrooms or regularly scheduled curricular programs or that is offered in place of regularly scheduled curricular programs. ‘Alternative education program’ does not include a private school or home-based private educational program.”

Please refer to Policy and Information Advisory 01.2 February 2001, Alternative Education Programs, or contact Beth Lewis, Alternative Education Consultant, 608/267-1062.

7. May an alternative education program be used as an option to meet credit requirements within the high school graduation policy?

Yes. Through an alternative education program, a student may demonstrate a level of proficiency in the designated subjects equivalent to that which would have been attained if he or she had satisfied the standard 13 credit requirements. An alternative education program could be used as an option under a local school board graduation policy to meet credit requirements for all students including students with disabilities. The student would still need to complete other board requirements as specified in policy.

8. May students with disabilities participate in alternative education programs as defined under s. 115.28(7)(e), Wis. Stats., as a way to meet credit requirements within districts’ high school graduation requirements?

Yes, if the IEP team determines that such a program is appropriate to meet the student’s educational needs. Some students with disabilities may be more successful demonstrating a level of proficiency in designated subjects through alternative programs, which would assist the student to complete the credit requirement portion of the graduation requirements. However, most students with disabilities can meet traditional high school graduation requirements through modification of course requirements or instructional accommodations with input from the regular teacher and support from the special education teacher.

Students may graduate with a regular diploma by demonstrating proficiency in subject areas within an alternative program. S. 118.33(1)(d), Wis. Stats., specifies how a school board may grant a high school diploma to a pupil who has not satisfied traditional credit requirements if the following conditions apply:

The pupil was enrolled in an alternative education program, as defined in s. 115.28(7)(e)(1). The school board determines that the pupil has demonstrated a level of proficiency in the subjects listed in par. (a) (4 credits of English, 3 credits of social studies, 2 credits of mathematics, 2 credits of science, 1.5 credits of physical education, and .5 credits of health education), equivalent to that which he or she would have attained if he or she had satisfied the requirements under par. (a).

9. Can students with disabilities complete high school graduation requirements through a competency-based or parallel curriculum?

Yes. Districts have authority to design graduation policies that recognize coursework that is modified from the general curriculum. A competency-based approach could be used to demonstrate proficiency in designated subjects to earn credits leading to a regular high school diploma. Some schools use a parallel curriculum taught through special education classes to meet course credit requirements.

10. How are academic content standards and the general education curriculum linked to the IEP and related to high school completion?

Academic content standards specify the essential knowledge, skills, and behaviors that all students are expected to achieve in school. Benchmarks are progress indicators for gauging students' achievement of each of the standards. The district's general education curriculum should provide the content and instructional activities to assist all students, including students with disabilities, to attain such standards. The IEP, through its goals and objectives or benchmarks, can provide access and learning opportunities (accommodations, adaptations, and specialized therapies, programs, and supports). As a result the student with a disability can benefit from the general education content, which in turn is linked to academic content standards. General education content may be left as is or modified through alternate performance indicators, which are extensions of academic content standards, depending upon the severity of the student's disability. The goal is to maintain high expectations and individualized approaches to maximize learning and achievement for students with disabilities.

11. How does the IEP relate to meeting graduation criteria?

A student with a disability may meet the academic performance criterion in district policy by meeting IEP goals based on model academic standards through the IEP process. For students with more severe impairments, alternative performance indicators may be used as extensions of the academic content standards for all students. The IEP process may identify goals and objectives or benchmarks for the student to complete content standard goals and meet criteria within the school board's graduation policy. Student performance on IEP goals and objectives may be used to meet the academic performance criteria in a school board's graduation policy. The IEP team and any other staff making decisions about academic performance must do so in the context of the district's graduation policy.

12. What is the function of the IEP team in determining *appropriate* services needed for students with disabilities to meet graduation requirements and receive the regular high school diploma?

The function of the IEP team is to conduct a review of the student's IEP at least annually. Annual review ensures that the district's high school graduation requirements can be met and that the goals and objectives of the IEP can and will be completed. If the IEP team determines that the district's high school graduation requirements cannot or will not be met, alternate goals and objectives are needed. Students with disabilities who have not been awarded a regular diploma may continue to receive special education services until they become 21 or complete the school term in which the student turns 21.

Questions related to students with disabilities completing a High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED)

13. May a district give a certificate to a student leaving school who has not achieved the criteria needed to meet the local school board graduation policy (for example, an “attendance” or “special” certificate)?

A school district does have the authority to award “certificates of attendance” or similar certificates to students who do not, or cannot, meet the district's graduation criteria. However, students with disabilities remain eligible for FAPE until they graduate with a regular high school diploma or age out of special education after their 21st birthday.

14. Why should any student, including a student with a disability, enroll in an HSED program?

Enrollment in an HSED program should only be considered when the high school program does not meet the student's needs, the student is very credit deficient, and all other alternative program options have been considered. Most postsecondary education institutions and many employers consider the HSED as evidence of high school completion. Completing the HSED with general educational development (GED) testing represents achievement of a nationally recognized standard.

15. What is the exception under compulsory attendance for HSED that allows any student, including students with disabilities, to attend a program not leading to graduation?

The only exception to regular attendance leading to completion of a regular high school diploma is contained in s. 118.15(1)(c)(2), Wis. Stats. It specifies that “upon the child's request and with the written approval of the child's parent or guardian, any child who is 17 years of age or over may be excused by the school board from regular school attendance if the child and his or her parent or guardian agree, in writing, that the child will participate in a program or curriculum modification under par. (d) leading to the child's high school graduation or leading to a high school equivalency diploma (HSED) under 115.29(4).” Chapter PI 5.035(1)(b)(1), Wis. Adm. Code, further specifies that these 17 year old students may begin taking the GED tests “only if the person is continuously enrolled and attending a program under a contracted arrangement between the local high school of residence and a Technical College System district, or a community based organization....”

16. How is receiving an HSED different than a regular high school diploma?

An HSED is not equal to a regular high school diploma. Students with disabilities remain eligible for FAPE until they graduate with a regular high school diploma or no longer are eligible to receive special education after their 21st birthday. In some cases the content and structure of the program may not be suited to the needs of the student with disabilities.

17. What level of basic academic skill is required in order to successfully pass the GED tests, which are typically required for completing an HSED?

The skill levels required for completing an HSED are somewhere between 8th and 9th grade level. The GED tests are designed to measure academic outcomes (skills and concepts) associated with four years of regular high school instruction. Each of the five tests (Writing Skills, Social Studies, Science, Interpreting Literature and the Arts, and Mathematics) uses a multiple-choice question format based on critical thinking and problem solving. This format will change in 2002 to add the skills of communication and information processing. The tests are intended not to penalize candidates who lack recent academic experience or who have acquired their education in an informal manner. The context of the test items is relevant to adult experiences. Most test questions require the understanding of broad concepts and generalizations rather than the ability of the examinees to remember facts, details, or precise definitions. In addition, in 2002 the emphasis within the core content areas will reflect the demands of the workplace and higher education.

The performance standard required of examinees in Wisconsin was set using a sample of graduating high school seniors. The passing score was set so that it is comparable to the demonstrated performance of graduating seniors. It is important to note when the performance standard was set that one-third of high school graduates could not have passed the GED tests. A detailed description of the tests in the GED battery can be found in Section 3 of the “2000 GED Examiner’s Manual.”

18. Under what circumstances, if any, is it appropriate for a high school student with a disability to begin pursuing an HSED?

The IEP team determines the educational services that are needed to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and meet the needs of the student. The IEP team must consider program modifications and adaptations, supplemental aids and services, and program modifications and support for school personnel. In addition, the IEP team must consider special factors when developing the IEP, including behavior, limited English proficiency, Braille needs, communication needs, and assistive technology. If an IEP team determines that a 17 year old student’s needs can be met appropriately through an HSED program, then the school district must enter into a contracted agreement for such services. The LEA still is required to provide needed special education services even when a student with disabilities is enrolled in the HSED program. The IEP must specify these services.

19. Can high schools begin preparing a student with a disability for the HSED early in the student’s high school experience?

No. Students, including students with disabilities, should not be tracked into an HSED program. A public school program should be designed to allow the pupils enrolled to meet high school graduation requirements and receive a regular high school diploma under s. 118.33, Wis. Stats.

20. Who should be involved in the decision-making process that results in a high school student with a disability being placed in an HSED preparation program at a technical college?

The IEP team will make this determination. A representative from the technical college system should be invited to the IEP meetings if placement in an HSED program will be considered. Any other individuals responsible for developing the contract for services between the school district and the technical college should also be invited and involved in the IEP meetings.

21. What if a technical college or community-based organization's instructional staff find that a contracted student with a disability lacks the basic skills necessary to benefit from a technical college or community-based organization's HSED preparation program under s. 118.15(1)(c)(2), Wis. Stats.?

The IEP team should be reconvened to determine any changes needed in the student's program. This may include having the LEA provide for additional support to assist the student in the HSED program or consideration of a change in the student's enrollment in the program. A student with a disability by definition needs special education and related services. These specific services must be documented in the IEP, and the district must ensure they are provided. This remains true when a student with a disability attends a technical college through a written contract per s. 118.15, Wis. Stats. The student's school district of residence is responsible for ensuring that needed special education and/or related services while he or she attends the technical college are provided. This does *not* mean that the high school has to *provide* these services. It may be more appropriate to have the technical college provide the services and adjust the contractual cost to the student's school district of residence accordingly. The written agreement must state the services provided, time period, and cost. Services provided must include those specified in the IEP.

The IEP should identify any special education, related services, or special factors that a student needs while attending a technical college through a s. 118.15, Wis. Stats., contract. As part of transition planning, the technical college staff should be involved in the process of developing an IEP for these students. Since pursuing an HSED instead of a regular high school diploma is a very significant educational decision, the decision should also be documented in the student's IEP. Copies of the IEP should be available to all participants, including the parent or guardian.

22. Who pays for supports like supplemental aids, services, and assistive technology (above and beyond what the HSED program routinely provides for students who do not have a disability)?

The LEA is responsible for paying costs over and above the cost for the HSED program. All services should be listed in the IEP and attached to the HSED contract.

23. What if an 18-21 year old student with a disability has dropped out and subsequently decides he or she wants to obtain an HSED?

A student with a disability who has dropped out of school may re-enroll in order to benefit from the rights that they could receive through the IEP and placement process through age 21 (as defined in state and federal law). The IEP team determines the appropriate program and placement for the student.

24. Who is responsible for providing the GED testing accommodations as part of an HSED program for a high school student with a disability? Should the IEP indicate this need?

A GED Testing Center must ensure that no discriminatory testing services are provided to examinees with disabilities. The cost of testing accommodations is the responsibility of the agency/institution housing the test center, normally the technical college/correctional facility. The need for accommodations of any kind should be addressed in a student's IEP. Accommodation requests must have supporting documentation.

25. Who is responsible for obtaining the psychological data required by the GED Testing Service for a high school student with a disability to defend a request for GED test accommodation(s)?

The student's LEA is responsible for ensuring that any documentation needed in order to obtain approval for testing accommodations for a high school student with a disability are provided to the GED examiner. Each technical college test center has a designated disability professional who is qualified to sign the accommodation form.

26. What responsibility does a school district have for a student with a disability once he or she has completed an HSED program?

The LEA should document completion of the HSED program. HSED program completion fulfills compulsory attendance requirements. The student no longer is required to attend school. The LEA should document that they have offered FAPE by sending a letter to the parent/guardian/adult student explaining that since an HSED is not the same as a regular high school diploma, students remain eligible for services until they become 21 or graduate by completing their district's regular high school graduation requirements.

27. Must the LEA offer to conduct a three-year re-evaluation on a student who has an HSED and remains eligible for special education?

Yes. This also is true for other students with disabilities who are enrolled but not attending school and have not received a regular high school diploma. The school district should offer to conduct a re-evaluation and notify parents and students that they are eligible for special education until they graduate or reach the age of 21.

28. Which students with disabilities are eligible for contracted services under s. 118.15, Wis. Stats., HSED programs?

All students with disabilities whose IEP teams have recommended placement in an HSED program are eligible for consideration of contracted services under s. 118.15, Wis. Stats. The IEP should be attached to the agreement. The IEP includes goals, objectives, and documentation of needed services.

29. What responsibility does the public school have for providing special education services to a student with a disability who enters an HSED program at the technical college after this option was begun in a youth correctional facility?

Special statutory language exists under s. 118.15(1)(cm), Wis. Stats., concerning students who begin an HSED program in a secured correctional facility, juvenile detention center, or county jail. That language states that if a student who is 17 years of age or older, with the written permission of his or her parent or guardian, began a program leading to a high school equivalency diploma while in a secured correctional facility, a secured child caring institution, a secure detention facility, or the juvenile portion of a county jail requests to finish the program at a technical college, the school board is required to grant this request and enter into a written agreement with the technical college. The technical college must admit the student. The public school is not required to bear the cost of contractual services from the technical college. However, the public school is responsible for the special education and related services specified in the IEP.

30. Under what circumstances can a school district prepare students to take the HSED and grant them a regular high school diploma?

- A. Under a waiver granted to Wisconsin in 2001 from the GED Testing Service, a school district may prepare students within their school, rather than entering into a contract with the technical college, to take the HSED under GEDO2 if the school district
- applies to DPI and makes assurances related to participation in the program,
 - grants the student a regular high school diploma, and
 - has developed a current IEP that recommends participation and documents related services and aids necessary for successful completion of the program.
- B. A local school board may provide a regular high school diploma to a student on a case-by-case basis who has completed an HSED if their local school board policy permits. A district is in no way obligated to do so, and often this option is used only for older adults who make individual requests to the local school board.

Basic Information regarding Special Education and Definitions Section

1. What is the definition of special education?

Special education is specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability including: instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals, in institutions and other settings, and instruction in physical education.

2. What is an IEP?

“Individual education program” (IEP) is a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with s.115.787, Wis. Stats. An individualized education program is the process, meetings, and documents involved in determining the unique needs of a child with a disability and the programs and services needed to meet those needs. Federal law requires the following:

- All students with disabilities must have an IEP.
- The IEP must be revised at least annually, or as necessary.
- Due process hearings and other legal procedures must be guaranteed to resolve disputes between schools and families.
- Records must be confidential.
- Parent(s) must be invited to the IEP meeting.
- Evaluation procedures must be nondiscriminatory.
- A variety of assessment tools must be used for evaluation. They must contain relevant, functional, and development information including information provided by the parent(s).
- Student evaluation must be strength-based, not deficit-focused.
- The student’s general education classroom teacher must be a member of the IEP team.
- The IEP must document how the student is to be involved and is to progress through the general education curriculum.
- Some transition requirements focus on post-school planning, needed courses of study, and interagency involvement.
- Special factors must be considered, including behavioral interventions, language needs for a student who speaks limited English, Braille for a student who is visually impaired, other communication needs of the student, and student needs for assistive technology.

3. How does the IEP help students with a disability succeed in high school completion?

The IEP is a planning process (as well as a product) that documents that the student is receiving a free appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with all federal and state requirements. The IEP also documents that, to the maximum extent appropriate, a student with a disability is educated with individuals who do not require special education. IEP development is a collaborative process among all IEP team members including parent(s) and also the student, when appropriate. The IEP is developed by the IEP team based on the student’s involvement and progress in general curriculum and meeting the child’s other educational needs that result from the child’s disability. The IEP process is ongoing and involves progress monitoring and decision making that is goal oriented. It should also be based on the student’s needs and directed at improving student results. The IEP is the primary vehicle for

communicating a school district's commitment to addressing the unique educational needs of a student with a disability.

The IEP is the tool used by the local school district IEP team to document a student's present level of educational performance, to state measurable annual goals, and to identify special education and related services which will be provided to the student. IEPs must include post-school transitional planning by age 14 (earlier depending on student need) which may include exploring the best high school completion option for the student with a disability.

4. What is the definition of a "student with a disability"?

A "student with a disability" means a child who, by reason of any of the following, needs special education and related services: cognitive disabilities, orthopedic impairments, hearing impairments, autism, speech or language impairments, traumatic brain injury, visual impairments, other health impairments, emotional behavioral disabilities, or specific learning disabilities.

5. What is the definition of a related service?

Related services include "such developmental, corrective and other supportive services as may be required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education...." They include:

Transportation	Early identification and assessment of disabilities
Speech and language pathology	Counseling services (including rehabilitation counseling)
Audiology	Medical services for diagnosis or evaluation
Psychological services	Social work services in schools
Physical therapy; Occupational therapy	School health services
Recreation (including therapeutic recreation)	Orientation and mobility
Parent counseling and training	

6. What is FAPE?

Providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is a requirement under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which ensures that all children with disabilities receive special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs. FAPE means "special education and related services that are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; meet the standards of the state educational agency, ...; include preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education ...; and are provided in conformity with an IEP" [34 CFR 300.13]

7. What are supplemental aids and services?

Supplemental aids and services are aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education-related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate. Examples include oral test taking, small class size, modified format, note taker, large print, extended time, seat location, immediate feedback, cue cards, or additional supervision.

8. What are program modifications and supports for school personnel?

These are supports provided to school personnel to assist the child to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals and to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum. The ultimate focus of these supports to school personnel is to ensure the provision of FAPE to children with disabilities. Teachers and other service providers who are not IEP team participants must be informed about their responsibilities identified in the students IEP. Examples could include, but are not limited to training/in-service, assistance in modifying tests or materials, special equipment, team teaching, peer consultation, planning time, and acquisition of unique materials.

9. What is assistive technology?

Assistive technology services and devices are "any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device... [A]ssistive technology device means any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability." [34 CFR 300.5 & 6]

10. Who is on an IEP team?

When a child is referred for consideration as a child with a disability, the local education agency (LEA) appoints an IEP team (s. 115.777, Wis. Stats.). This team includes:

- **The parents of the child.** Parents or guardians are equal participants on the IEP team.
- **At least one regular education teacher** if the child is or may be participating in a regular education environment. It is the intent of the law that the regular educator should be one who will be teaching the child.
- **At least one special education teacher** who has extensive and recent training and experience related to the child's known or suspected disability or, where appropriate, at least one special education provider of the child.
- **A local education agency (LEA) representative** who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of special education, is knowledgeable about the general curriculum, and is knowledgeable about the availability of and authorized to commit LEA resources.
- **An individual** who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results. This individual can also fill another role.
- **Other individuals at the discretion of the parent or LEA**, including related services personnel as appropriate. (It is important to be aware that the occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), and school nursing practice acts and professional standards require an evaluation prior to providing services.) The IEP team must include the appropriate professional if the child may need any of these services. Representatives from Birth to 3 programs or Head Start should be included when referring preschool children. A representative from the technical college system should be invited to IEP meetings related to contracted programs and post-high school transition planning.
- **The child**, whenever appropriate. You must invite a child to any IEP meeting where transition is discussed.

11. What does the IEP team do?

The IEP team is responsible for four basic activities:

- Evaluating the child to determine whether the child has or continues to have a disability and to identify the child's educational needs.
- For each child who has a disability, developing, reviewing, and revising the child's individualized education program.
- Determining a special education placement for each child who has a disability.
- Developing a transition statement of service needs (age 14 or younger if needed) and identified services (age 16 or younger, if needed) including, if appropriate, a statement of interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages.

Other Definitions

12. Graduation standards for Wisconsin

S. 118.33, Wis. Stats., states that a school board may not grant a high school diploma to any pupil unless that pupil has earned in the high school grades at least: 4 credits of English, 3 credits of social studies, 2 credits of mathematics, 2 credits of science, 1.5 credits of physical education, and in grades 7-12, at least 0.5 credit of health education.

In addition, the state superintendent shall encourage school boards to require an additional 8.5 credits selected from any combination of vocational education, foreign languages, fine arts, and other courses.

It is important to note that recently enacted s.118.33(1)(f), Wis. Stats., requires local school boards by September 1, 2002, to develop a board policy for graduation criteria that are in addition to the requirements under s. 118.13(1)(a), Wis. Stats., including the pupils score on the high school graduation test, the pupil's academic performance, and recommendations of teachers. Beginning September 1, 2003, the law further prohibits a school board from granting a high school diploma to any pupil unless the pupil has satisfied the board's policy under s. 118.33(1)(f), Wis. Stats.

13. Policies to accommodate students with or without disabilities to meet graduation requirements and receive a regular high school diploma

Under the graduation standard, school districts may adopt policies to accommodate pupils with exceptional educational interests, needs, or requirements not limited to children with disabilities defined under s. 115.76(5), Wis. Stats. Graduation policy also includes varied criteria within academic performance, board-approved courses, and teacher recommendations.

14. What is an alternative program?

S. 115.28(7)(e), Wis. Stats., states that alternative education program means an instructional program approved by the school board, that utilizes successful alternative or adaptive school structures and teaching techniques, and that is incorporated into existing, traditional classrooms or regularly scheduled curricular programs or that is offered in place of regularly scheduled curricular programs. Alternative education program does not include a private school or home-based private educational program.

15. What is specific learning disabilities (SLD) defined by the general educational development (GED) Testing Service?

Definition: The GED Testing Service uses the U.S. Office of Education's 1977 definition of a specific learning disability. (Federal Register, 42:250,p.65083. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office) – The term specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include (persons) who have learning disabilities which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

16. High school equivalency diplomas and certificates of general educational development (PI 5)

- A. General educational development (GED) test, PI 5.02(6)** “General educational development test” means the test developed by the American Council on Education and administered in Wisconsin at testing sites approved by the state superintendent and the American Council on Education.
PI 5.02(6m) “Graduated from high school” for purposes of compulsory attendance under s.118.15(1)(a), Wis. Stats., means having received a diploma in satisfaction of school board requirements under s. 118.33, Wis. Stats., or a high school equivalency diploma under s. 115.29(4), Wis. Stats.
- B. PI 5.02(7) High school credit** means the credit given for successful completion of a school term of study in one course in the high school grades that meets daily for a normal class period or the equivalent established by the board.
- C. PI 5.02(8) High school diploma** means a document granted by the board to a pupil upon successful completion of a high school program meeting the requirements outlined in this chapter and those requirements established by the board.
- D. PI 5.02(9) High school equivalency diploma** means the diploma granted by the state superintendent under s. 115.29(4), Wis. Stats., and this chapter.
- E. S. 115.29(4), Wis. Stats. – High School Graduation Equivalency.** Grant declarations of equivalency of high school graduation to persons, if in the state superintendent’s judgement they have presented satisfactory evidence of having completed a recognized high school course of study or its equivalent. The state superintendent may establish the standards by which high school graduation equivalency is determined. Such standards may consist of evidence of high school courses completed in high schools recognized by the proper authorities as accredited, results of examinations given by or at the request of the state superintendent, successful completion or correspondence study courses given by acceptable correspondence study schools, a general educational development certificate of high school equivalency issued by an agency of the U.S. government, course credits received in schools meeting the approval of the state superintendent, or other standards established by the state superintendent.
- F. PI 5.03 Eligibility.** No person may be granted a high school equivalency diploma or certificate of general educational development unless that person verifies in writing that he or she:
 - Is a resident of Wisconsin for voting purposes, or has lived in Wisconsin for at least 10 days, is a migrant worker as defined in s. 103.90(5)(a), Wis. Stats., or is the child of a migrant worker.
 - Is at least 18 years and 6 months of age, or that the class with which the person entered grade 9 has graduated from high school.
 - Has not graduated from high school and is not enrolled in any public or private high school.

- Has completed a counseling session or sessions provided by a high school, technical college system (TCS) district, community-based organization, college, university, psychologist licensed by the department or the department of regulation and licensing, or a school counselor licensed by the department. The sessions shall include all of the following:
 - Assessment of the person's reading level and career interests and aptitudes.
 - Discussion of the options available to the individual regarding completion of high school, the high school equivalency diploma, and the certificate of general educational development, as well as the requirements, expectations, benefits and limitations of each option.
 - Development of a plan for completion of one of the options discussed and subsequent activities necessary to work toward an identified goal, career, or occupation.

17. Optional ways for earning a high school equivalency diploma (HSED)

There are several options to gaining an HSED certificate; only one of them includes GED testing. The following additional options are available to earn an HSED:

- PI 5.05 – High school equivalency diploma based on passing of the general educational development (GED) test with additional requirements in citizenship, health, career awareness, and employability skills.
- PI 5.06 – High school equivalency diploma based on attainment of high school credits.
- PI 5.07 – High school equivalency diploma based on postsecondary education.
- PI 5.08 – High school equivalency diploma based on a foreign diploma or degree.
- PI 5.09 – High school equivalency diploma based on completion of a competency based program approved by the state superintendent.

The majority of contracted programs for students with disabilities relate to the PI 5.05 option.

18. What are the Wisconsin waiver options, effective 2001, for completing an HSED?

Nationally GED programs were originally designed to serve adults who had not completed high school because of military service. The programs expanded to serve all adults who did not complete high school. In order for a person who is under the state's age of compulsory school attendance (18 in Wisconsin) to access a GED program, the state must have a waiver from the GED Testing Service (GEDTS). Wisconsin currently has a waiver issued by the GEDTS that leads to a high school equivalency diploma (HSED). This process involves the school district contracting with the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) or a community-based organization (CBO) for an educational program to prepare a student to complete the requirements for the HSED. With the advent of additional alternative education programs, interest exists in expanding Wisconsin's waiver to serve students who are attending the high school. This expansion would allow some 17 year old high school students enrolled in alternative education programs meeting a variety of benchmarks to use the GED test battery and the four additional requirements of PI 5.05 (health, civic literacy, employability skills, and career awareness) as a means of allowing students to demonstrate proficiency. The ongoing program, which has historically been referred to as the s.118.15, Wis. Stats., contract program will be referred to as GED Option #1

(GEDO #1). The second alternative, specifically designed for and provided by high schools, will be referred to as GED Option #2 (GEDO #2).

GEDO #1

Participation in GEDO #1 would continue as it has for the past 10 years. Students age 17 and older will continue to be able to request permission (and funding) from their local school board to participate in a contracted program through the WTCS or a CBO. Students would self-select and would be seeking a program separate from the traditional high school program and building. Authorization to use this type of program exists in Wisconsin statutes, and program contracting is completed with the local school district and the provider. A minimum enrollment of 15 hours per week is required.

GEDO #2

Participation in GEDO #2 will be limited to students who are severely credit deficient but who are currently capable of demonstrating most of the competencies necessary to meet their high school graduation requirements. Approval to participate in the GEDO #2 will be limited to those districts that apply to the Department of Public Instruction and sign assurances agreeing to specific program requirements. Those program requirements include:

1. Students served will be at least 17 years of age.
2. Students will be at least one year behind their 9th grade class in credits earned.
3. Students served should be able to demonstrate an ability to read at or above the 9th grade level.
4. A formal meeting(s) will be held before a student is allowed to begin a GEDO #2 program. This meeting will include a discussion of the educational options available to the student; the academic, attendance, and behavioral expectations of the student once in the program; and the anticipated goal of the program (traditional high school diploma) as well as educational options if the student completes academic preparation before they are eligible to take the final GED test. The student, his or her parent(s) or guardian(s), the student's guidance counselor, principal, and at least one teacher (or their designees) must participate in the meeting(s).
5. Students must volunteer for the program *after* participating in the meeting described in #4 above.
6. A contract between the student, the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), the school, and the GEDO program's coordinator outlining the hours of attendance, academic and behavioral expectations, and services to be provided by the school district will be signed.
7. A student/teacher ratio of no more than 15:1 will be maintained in the GEDO #2 program.
8. At least 15 hours of instruction are required each week. The student will be required to participate in at least 10 hours of math, science, social studies, language arts, or health instruction each week until his/her instructors certify that he/she is academically prepared to take the final GED test. At this point a larger portion of the student's 15 hours per week can be devoted to experiential training (for example, vocational/technical education, art, music, foreign language, or work experience). All students must be *continuously enrolled and attending* the program until they are eligible to take the final GED test.
9. Students with disabilities will not be excluded from the program but must have a current IEP recommending participation in GEDO #2. The IEP must document any related aids and services necessary for successful completion of the program.
10. Eighty percent (80%) or more of the students accepted for GEDO #2 must successfully complete the program and graduate with their class as a condition of program approval for the following year.
11. Students participating in the GEDO #2 program will be required to take the high school graduation test under s. 118.30, Wis. Stats.
12. Districts may designate other conditions for graduation in school district policy.
13. Students who successfully complete GEDO #2 requirements will be entitled to a traditional high school diploma issued by their school district and to participate in the same graduation ceremony as other high school graduates.
14. Program data required by GEDTS will be collected and submitted to the Department of Public Instruction each year.

Current Status

A committee of professionals currently involved in GEDO #1 and those who may be involved in GEDO #2 helped the Department of Public Instruction staff develop and refine the waiver submitted to the GEDTS. The Department of Public Instruction received approval to extend the waiver for GEDO #1 and to expand the waiver to include GEDO #2. Applications were mailed to technical colleges, community-based organizations, and school districts.

Additional Information

For additional information, contact Beth Lewis, DPI Alternative Education Program Consultant. Phone: 608/267-1062. Email: beth.lewis@dpi.state.wi.us

19. Are accommodations available to candidates with a disability who take the GED test? If so, what are they?

The range of accommodations is determined by the needs of candidates with disabilities. Need must be fully documented by a qualified and competent professional. The most common accommodations are listed below:

- **Extra Time:** The time limits are extended under special conditions or when the audiocassette or Braille editions are used. Candidates with disabilities often require extra time to answer questions and may become easily fatigued.
- **Private Room:** Testing in a private room is available to those who, because of an illness or disability, need to be away from others. It is also available to those whose specific learning disabilities or psychological condition make testing in a group distracting to them or to other candidates.
- **Frequent Breaks:** Some examinees, because of physical discomfort or because of their inability to concentrate for extended periods of time, require frequent breaks during the test.
- **Interpreter:** A certified interpreter may be used to interpret test instructions for an essay topic only – not for multiple-choice test questions – to examinees with hearing impairments.
- **Scribe:** A scribe, sometimes called a secretary, amanuensis, or recorder, is someone who records the answers to multiple-choice questions or the essay as dictated by the examinee. This accommodation is appropriate for those who have difficulty writing as a result of visual or physical impairments or specific learning disabilities.
- **Calculator:** Adults who are legally blind are entitled to use a talking calculator or abacus on the mathematics test. Adults with physical and specific learning disabilities may, under certain conditions, be granted the use of a calculator.

20. What forms are acceptable for requesting testing accommodation for candidates with disabilities?

Forms included in the blue *2000 Examiners Manual* must be used in order to obtain an accommodation. Ask any official GED examiner for a copy.